

Dieppe lands music school

■ Sources say city offered Riverview developers deal 'too good' to turn down

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The developers for a music con-

servatory for Metro Moncton are within days of completing an agreement for construction of the facility, the Times & Transcript has learned.

But it will not be built in Riverview as originally planned by Juergen Weiland, who would be its managing director, and his wife Melody Dobson, its artistic director. As a Riverview native,

that was Dobson's original choice for the prestigious facility. But Dieppe now reportedly has the inside track.

The couple proposed earlier this year to locate the Chocolate River Music Conservatory on the northeast corner of Findlay Boulevard and Whitepine Road in

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Riverview, on property owned by the Dobson family.

The structure was to be the centerpiece of a \$2-million project and would be complemented by two adjacent buildings, which would be leased out to businesses with the revenues used to fund the conservatory.

However, reliable sources informed the newspaper that the facility will be built in Dieppe, thanks to an offer from the city that was "just too good" to be ignored by the developers.

"It is very close to being a done deal," noted one of the sources.

Dobson declined to confirm the conservatory's exact location, noting that "we are sworn to secrecy until the offer is finalized."

Dobson and her husband are not at liberty to reveal any of the details of the deal until "all the t's are crossed and the i's are dotted," she said.

"It was a very, very good offer, more than anything we could have hoped for, and we are really excited about it," she said. "I would love to comment and we are just bursting to tell people about it, but we can't until everything is finalized. . . . We should be able to announce it to the press in about a week to two weeks time."

Weiland and Dobson had their Riverview property rezoned to CC Central Commercial from R1 Resi-

dential at the March 22 meeting of Riverview town council.

However, due to a raft of conditions attached to the rezoning, that were recommended by residents in the area, the developers announced after the meeting that they would, instead, build the conservatory in Moncton or Dieppe. They said the conditions would make financing unattractive to banks.

But the developers changed their minds and informed the town a couple of weeks later that they could live with the conditions for the rezoning. Riverview was back in running.

Brenda Orchard, director of corporate services and economic development for the town, emphasized yesterday that the rezoning conditions would not have played a part if Weiland and Dobson opt to construct the music conservatory in another community.

She said they made that clear when they met with council in a closed session last Monday night.

But Orchard indicated there is little chance of Riverview getting the conservatory at this point.

"They (the developers) have been presented with another offer that is way beyond what the Town of Riverview could ever match," said Orchard. "As business owners, they naturally have to investigate any lucrative offers coming their way. There is nothing we can do about that."

She declined comment on the site, except to say it is in Metro Moncton, or to provide any other details regarding the proposal made to the developers.

Mayor Clarence Sweetland said that Riverview town council certainly wanted the music conservatory in its community and everyone was encouraged a few weeks ago when Weiland and Dobson stated that they could work with the conditions imposed with the rezoning. But he realized the developers also had talks with the other two communities (Moncton and Dieppe) about the project.

"We would love it if they built it here, but we don't have much in the way of concessions we can offer them."

On the positive side, the mayor said the developers indicated they will still build something on their Findlay/Whitepine property in the not too distant future. The current Riverview town council is committed to being more "proactive and aggressive" in attracting new businesses to the town, he said.

As to whether the new council might be more supportive of Cheryl Conway, the woman who has presented seven different applications to council to have her property on Hillsborough Road rezoned to HC Highway Commercial from R2B Mix, in the past three years, remains to be seen. In each case, she has been rejected.

Conway hopes to erect a conven-

ience store/gas station on her land.

Sweetland, who seconded her latest attempt going to the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission, said he understands she has a new proposal for the property. "I haven't seen it. But the ball is in her court and council will certainly consider it when it comes before us."

The mayor suggested at an earlier meeting that Conway should take her most recent proposal back to the town planning commission. He said she pulled it before the commission had an opportunity to examine it and make recommendation to the council.

Orchard said council has followed the legal process regarding both Conway's rezoning applications and the one made by Weiland and Dobson. She said both have been handled in public, open forums.

She said Conway has three options right now regarding her Hillsborough Road land.

As the mayor suggests, Orchard said she can re-submit her last proposal (the one she withdrew) before the town planning commission for recommendation; she can come back with her very first proposal, which was submitted in 2001 and was recommended by the GMTFC, but later voted down by council; or she could come back to council with a "whole new plan" regarding the property.